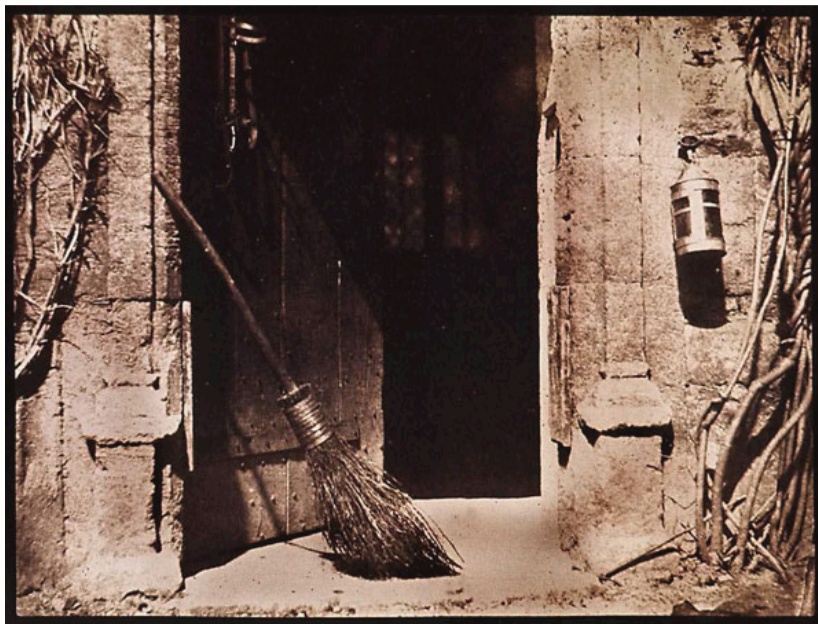


# The Necessity



## *for the* Shaykh

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*by*

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ

WA LA-DhIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!  
(Sūrah al-Aʿnākabut 29:45)



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

wa hadnāyhumā-ṣ-ṣirāṭa-l-mustaqīm  
And we guided them to the straight way.  
(Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāāffāt 37:118)

After the seed of blessing has fallen into the fertile soil of the heart by the Grace of Allāh ﷻ one must not let it wither. Rather one must place it in the care of a farmer who will it protect from the many ways it can be destroyed. In his care the seed will mature and bear fruit in accord with its true being. The above verse of the Qurʾān refers to that type of care.



In the ocean of the soul  
it is impossible to swim and you may drown!  
The only solution is to get on the Ship of Safety.  
(*as-safinatu-n-najah*)

And so the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ declared:  
“I am the Ark in the Infinite Ocean;  
as are those who are my successors,  
who also have my Vision.  
We are the Ship of Safety in this Ocean.  
Do not try to swim away.”

—Rumi—



In the domain of Love  
do not take even a step without a Guide.  
For on this road  
he who has no Guide will lose the way for sure.

—Ḥāfiz—



As far as I know, it was Mawlay al-ʿArabi ad-Darqawī ﷺ who said:  
“Whoever wishes to travel the Path without a ṣhaykh, so the ṣhayṭān  
is his ṣhaykh”.

He was referring to those people who take their taṣawwuf from books.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

Deadly poison can look like milk and honey.  
Take care lest you confuse one for the other.

Shayṭān was a jinn; his name was ʾIblīs.

His sin was the sin of pride.

It was he who said,

“I am better than he is.

You made me from fire and him from clay.”

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ۚ  
قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

qāla mā manaʿaka ʾalla tasjudā ʾidḥ amartuk?  
qāla ʾana khayrum minh : kḥalaqātani min nārīñw  
wa kḥalaqātahu min ṭīn

[And Allāh ﷻ said]

“What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?”

[Iblīs] said, “You made me from fire and You made him from clay.”

(Sūrah al-Aʿraf 7:12)

The main characteristic of ʾIblīs was his pride, which made him think he was better than Adam ﷺ since he was created from fire and Adam ﷺ from clay.

This is exactly the position of the one who, though he is seeking, still thinks himself better than the “other” and thus can never receive the teaching because he believes himself, no matter how bad his position, to be better than those from whom he stands to benefit. His shaykh is his pride, and thus he has shayṭān for his shaykh, for in truth the one he follows is his pride.

## The Murīd

When we look at the Qurʾānic story in Sūrah al-Kahf about Prophet Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidinā Khidr ﷺ, we see that the Prophet Mūsā ﷺ was sent by Allāh ﷻ to go to seek a certain type of knowledge from Sayyidinā Khidr ﷺ who possessed it in abundance.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

But Sayyidinā Mūsā ؑ, even though he was a Prophet ؑ, suffered from an inability to take guidance from someone he could not recognize precisely because of his own self esteem, even though Sayyidinā Khidr ؑ made clear to him from the start that he would not be able to take the guidance (*hudal*/هُدَى).

To take guidance there are three steps which a person must undertake. The first is to really put everything else behind you and become a true seeker with a pure intention to find the truth, knowing you don't know that truth. The second step is to go wherever you have to go and do whatever you have to do to find that truth, and the third step is called *suhbah* — which means to enter into the company of someone who, for what ever reason that you even imagine or think, might be in touch with the truth you are seeking.



Those spiritual window-shoppers, who idly ask,  
“How much is that?” and say, “Oh, I'm just looking.”  
They handle a hundred items and put them down,  
— shadows with no capital —  
What is spent is love and two eyes wet with weeping.  
But these walk into a shop,  
and their whole lives pass suddenly in that moment in that shop.  
Even if you don't know what you want,  
buy something anyway  
just to be part of the exchanging flow.  
Start a huge, foolish project, like Nūḥ ؑ.  
It makes absolutely no difference  
what people think of you.  
Rumi, Mathnawi VI, 831-845



“Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing  
that we see too late the one that is open.”  
Alexander Graham Bell



Some general recommendations for the murīd (مرید) — the one who is the seeker of the sought (murād/مراد) — follow.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

### 1. Repentance

Repent sincerely for all those things you have done, which are out of bounds of ṣhārī°ah. Whichever stage the murīd reaches he must bring repentance along with him, because at each stage one commits a comparative amount of sins. Repentance is a very strong root.

### 2. Contentment

Be content and happy upon living on bare necessity. All extra wealth in your possession should be distributed to those in need or put in the service (*kḥidmah*) of one's ṣhaykh to facilitate his work.

### 3. Isolation

Remain in isolation (*kḥalwah*) even in a crowd and keep your heart distant from those immediately surrounding you.

### 4. Firm and Correct Belief

Believe firmly in your ṣhaykh as being the best for you. Believe all that which is required from you in °Islām. Stay away from bid°at and all things which are outside ṣhārī°ah.

### 5. Abstinence

Abstain from all things which are not lawful. Be very careful about what you eat and what you wear. Always dress with an eye to becoming invisible.

### 6. Patient

Be patient with all orders given to you by your ṣhaykh and be patient upon all difficulties that approach you on this path.

### 7. Resilient

Do not be soft with your appetitive self (*nafsu-l-ammara*). Constantly battle with them and do not fulfill their wishes. The *nafsu-l-ammara* are like a hungry lion. If you feed them they will wind up eating you.

### 8. Brave

Be brave in fulfilling all orders in °Islām and all orders given to you by your ṣhaykh. Do not be afraid of ṣhayṭān or the nafs in their tricks to frighten you away from this path or keep you away from fulfilling any order given to you by the ṣhaykh.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

### 9. Generous

To be successful in this path you must be generous. Miserliness forms a very thick veil between yourself and your goal. One must be ready to give away their wealth and life in this path.

### 10. Just

Fulfill the rights of everyone according to their state and station. Be fair with everyone and be just to all.

### 11. Truthful

Be steadfast in telling the truth. Be truthful to Allāh and to the creations of Allāh and stay well away from lies and deception. Do not do anything secretly and whatever you do, do solely for the sake of Allāh (*fī-sabilillāh*).

### 12. Knowledgeable

Learn enough to spend your daily life in the way shown to you in the teachings of ʿIslām. Abstain from knowledge which does not benefit you.

### 13. Humble

Be humble in each and every stage that you attain, this is the key to success.

### 14. Be alert and watch carefully all that you do.

Be sharp witted and alert in doing service (*k̥hidmah*) in following your shaykh. Be ready to carry out all orders that your shaykh gives you. And do not be afraid, even if you have to give your life.

### 15. Reprehensive

Think of yourself as being the lowest of all the murīds. Whatever deed you perform in service you must always think of it as being negligible. Even if you do not commit many sins, think of your self as a sinner.

### 16. Intelligent

You must be wise in performing all duties for the shaykh with the necessary politeness (ʿadab/ادب). According to Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī (صحيح البخاري), the Prophet ﷺ used to say, “The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and character.”

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

Do not use your own intelligence to object to or criticise any of the actions, speech or commands of the shaykh. Remember you came to him because you don't know, so don't think later you do know.

### 17. Respectful

Read and act upon all the etiquette outlined and respect your shaykh to the best of your ability.

### 18. Mannerly

Be cheerful and pleasant and approach all with good manners. Be polite and courteous to your fellow murīds. Do not put your workload upon anyone else. Keep away from pride and jealousy and always be happy and ready to do service (*kḥidmah*) to the shaykh.

### 19. Submissive

Place yourself in front of your shaykh as a dead body is placed in front of his washer before burial.

### 20. Entrust your self to the shaykh.

Never leave the company of your shaykh even if your shaykh has asked you to leave a thousand times. Accept all trials and tribulations that come to you and do not become disheartened.



These are some general rules which, if the one who seeks knowledge and tranquility of self follows, he or she will be safe. There are many little books which you can find here and there which deal with the *ʿadab* (manners) of the murīd. Most of them are useful and helpful. Always remember you would have never gone looking for the shaykh unless at some point you came to understand that you didn't really know why you were here and what it was and is all about and you knew you didn't know and, in truth, you really wanted to know why you were here and what life was really about.

So you went looking, not even knowing really what you were looking for, but knowing that you could not really continue to live your life as you had been living it because it just wasn't working out. Life was somehow hollow of real meaning or just that there was something, which you couldn't even really define, that was just not there, but its lack somehow took the flavor out of everything.



## The Necessity for the Shaykh

In time you became desperate or maybe your heart was broken, and you were tired of looking for love in all the wrong places and looking for love in all the wrong faces.



### The Shaykh

The Shaykh is the one who “has reached the degree of direction and experience” (*dar maqâm-i-irshādū shaykhūkat muta’ayin būdand*) (‘Abd ar-Rahmân Jâmî). In other words, the shaykh is required to have accomplished, under a rigorous spiritual guidance, the spiritual path and the whole mystical travel (*sulūk*) to be able to lead the travellers (*sālik*). The rightly-guided master can in turn guide the disciples, as the rightly-guided Khulafah and ‘Imāms could guide the Muslim believers—the ‘irshād passes to the rāshidūn so to say; the khulafā° should be khulafâ’i rāshidūn. This is one of the analogies often used by Sufis referring to the Prophetic model. And it exists not only as a model of the “beautiful example” or *‘uswatun hasanatun* of the Prophet ﷺ (33: 21), but as the general standard by which one can recognize the shuyukh.

Be sure when you first seek the guidance of the shaykh that he or she has all of their documents of license (*‘ijazāt*) and permission (*‘idhḥn*) from their own shaykh. Be wary of any person who claims that they are *uwaysi*: that is, those who claim to have received their ‘ijazat or ‘idhḥn in the *baṭīn* or from unseen and unknown sources.

Shaykh Ibn al-Arabi ﷺ briefly summarizes the signs of a shaykh-e-kāmil (the perfect and qualified shaykh) to be three:

Dīn resembling the Dīn of the Ambiyā°a ﷺ.

Prescribing like the physicians.

Management and control like that of kings or generals.

The exposition of the above summary is as follows:

He should possess the necessary knowledge of the Religion (*Dīn*) which he must have acquired by either academic pursuit of such knowledge or from companionship with the °Ulama-e-Muḥaqqiqīn.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

He must be a deputy khalifah attached to an authentic *silsilah* (line of transmission) and have an <sup>o</sup>ijazah (diploma) signed and witnessed by the previous shaykh in the silsilah.

He should be upright and pious.

He must have derived his own spiritual benefit by remaining for an adequate period of time in keeping the company of his own shaykh. Such “companionship” is either by physical presence in the association of the shaykh or, in certain cases, usually rare, by the means of correspondence.

The people of knowledge (i.e. the <sup>o</sup>ulema) must hold him in high esteem, and refer to him for their own understanding.

The effect of his companionship (*suhbah*) is increase in the desire for <sup>o</sup>akhira and Divine love (*maḥabbah*) as well as indifference to and lack of the love for the world (*dunya*).

The majority of his muridūn are clearly followers of the *shari<sup>o</sup>ah*, their conditions conforming and way of life conforms with the demands of the *shari<sup>o</sup>ah*.

He is devoid of greed and desire for worldly gain and benefit.

He engages in *tilawatu-l-qur<sup>o</sup>ān*, *dhikr*, *salawat*, *<sup>o</sup>aḥzab*, *<sup>o</sup>adwah* and other devotional practices.

He does not leave his muridūn loose and unfettered, and calls them to task when the need arises. He treats everyone, muridūn and non-muridūn, according to their respective abilities.

The one in whom these attributes exist is worthy of being a shaykh.

His companionship and your service to him are priceless treasures.

Once these attributes or perfection are found in a shaykh, one should not be concerned about *karāmat* (miracles) and *kashf* (intuitive insights). It is not necessary that these states exist in the shaykh-e-kāmil nor is it necessary that he be one who does not directly earn his livelihood but remains dependent on Allāh who provides for him from the unseen (*min al-ghayb <sup>o</sup>aw min al-jayb*).



## The Necessity for the ṣhaykh

Within the spiritual tradition, there is a map of the terrain held within the writings and the memory and memories of the ṣhaykh. Books, stories, discussions and direct experience are all part of this map. As one traverses the path, understanding of the various methods he uses to teach become clear.

The purpose of the ṣhaykh is to show you the path. To take you to and through the curtain of unity. Beyond that curtain is your destiny. You must humble yourself to accept the observations of your teacher, examining those aspects of yourself that need to be purified. Remember you cannot pass through the curtain by ‘yourself’. In the beginning and in the end you need the ṣhaykh.

Just by joining a sūfī tariqah you are not necessarily going to get to Allāh but you just might. Hence you should do what the ṣhaykh suggests to you. He is not so much ordering you to do these things, as he is just showing you the way. Therefore the murīd should have outmost respect for the teacher as he takes the student to the gate of knowledge and beyond.

The ṣhaykh or teacher should represent your model and goal as a human being. In some ways it doesn't matter if the teacher gets angry or presents unpleasant characteristics. Your intention must be to make that person your highest ideal and to look for those aspects you desire and admire.

The ṣhaykh is there to deliver the teachings.

Don't get stuck in thinking that the teacher *is* the teachings. The teacher is a human being who has studied and practiced the teaching longer than you.

And yet, what you project on the ṣhaykh is part of the process. If you imagine and see the highest form of human being in your ṣhaykh, you create that within yourself.

Many years ago I wrote a short poem to one of my earliest teachers.

“Oh Murshid  
in the garden of my being  
you see the flower of perfection.”

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

You are initiating the real teaching and growth. Imagining the teacher embodies the teaching that will lift you beyond your own limitations, and form a bridge to your higher self. You cannot do it on your own because of the hard shell of opinions and adaptations that surround you. By making that shell permeable and flexible, we observe who we truly are and that which we have accumulated.

Remember you have to show ʿadab with the shaykh by respecting him, both when he is alive and when he passes away. You have to keep connected and spend time with him as much as you can and assume that, in truth, you don't really exist, thinking 'I am nothing' and that is the shaykh who is really in charge of your affairs.

Listen to the advice of one of the servants of Allāh ﷺ: "Always have the best intention towards your shaykh. Do not abuse, slander or have your own opinion of what he says and does, or expose him to any evil. If he is true, then you will benefit by him. If he is a liar, Allāh ﷻ will give you benefit because of your intention."

In general a shaykh should:

Follow the Prophet ﷺ in all things great and small.

Adhere to the shari'ah and act on the basis of the sunnah.

The shaykh should speak what is in your heart.

He should answer questions before you ask them.

When you are in his presence, you should forget your troubles.

He takes your load. You feel your troubles lifted from you.

He praises Allāh ﷻ and the Prophet ﷺ and not himself. He points to Allāh ﷻ and the Prophet ﷺ and not himself.

He has the lineage (*silsilah*) and a liscence (*ʿijaza*) to teach the path.

He practices what he preaches.

The shaykh himself has to be on a very high level of ʿadab:

His own ʿadab to his shaykh and his silsilah and ultimately to the Prophet ﷺ.

His ʿadab to the general public.

His ʿadab to his murīdun.

His ʿadab with other shuyukh.

His ʿadab with the murīdun of other shuyukh.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

To expand on these points:

In order to be a shaykh and to continue to function as a shaykh, the shaykh has to follow his own shaykh. The shaykh has to show respect towards his shaykh, whether living or not. The shaykh has to be humble and modest. He always has to take the Prophet ﷺ as an example. His actions have to be in accord with the shari'ah, tariqah, haqqiqah and ma'rifah.

His 'adab to the general public:

The 'adab of the shaykh with the people is based on his remembering that he is in truth the khalifah of the Prophet ﷺ and as such his representative in time and space and so he must act and deal with each person according to their level of understanding. The shaykh has to be modest, tolerant and should not despise anybody based on the saying of Allāh ﷻ:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā 'arsalnāka 'illā raḥmatal-li-l-ālamīn

And We have not sent you except as a Mercy to all beings.

(Sūrah al-'Ambiyāā° 21:107)



His 'adab with own his murīdun:

With his own murīdun the shaykh must act with kindness, love and true compassion. The goal should be only the good of the murīd. The purpose of the shaykh is to help the murīdun reach the spiritual goal, to help the murīd to discover the truth about his or her self and to help the murīd to reach to the real and experiential knowledge of Allāh ﷻ.

The shaykh may at times appear to be ruthless and harsh. He may say things which seem to cut deeply and hurt as he attacks the lower self of the murīd, who is then thrown into confusion. From within this chaos the murīd comes to see certain of his or her base characteristics and, having recognized them as negative, he or she can then begin to rectify them, or fails.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

Failure usually means leaving the shaykh and wandering until once again the seeker find himself or herself before the open door.

The murīd has to realize that in reality the shaykh does not correct him out of vindictiveness or actually say anything hurtful, but rather that the shaykh was simply bringing out in the murīd certain base character traits which were deeply hidden. It is only the guilt and fear within the murīd that took them as words of negativity, criticism and subsequent pain. Thus the shaykh always acts out of concern for the good of the murīd.

This being said, it must also be said that the shaykh should never be seen to take advantage of the murīdun. If they have money or properties, he should not try to get these away from them for his own use. If they donate or give willingly for the tariqah or for the sake of Allāh ﷻ or for even his own self, it is acceptable. But he should not scheme to take their money or properties.

His ʿadab with other shuyukh:

He should always treat other shuyukh as his equals or better. A shaykh should not try to show that he is greater than the other shuyukh. This is true ʿadab.

His ʿadab with the murīds of other shuyukh:

A teacher should not take the murīds of other shuyukh as his servants or try to get their money. A shaykh should not try to steal the murīds of other shuyukh. This is a shame (ʿayb). It is not important how many followers a shaykh has but how many of them that he takes to Allāh ﷻ.

A true shaykh serves Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ only, and he lets Allāh ﷻ do everything. He gives the truth. He represents the truth and nothing but the truth. We have to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ in shariʿah, in tariqah, in haqqiqah and in maʿrifah. May Allāh ﷻ help all the shuyukh to be true, may Allāh ﷻ help us all to clean ourselves inwardly and outwardly. ... *ʿAmīn*.



## The Necessity for the Shaykh

The Shaykh and the murīd:

Some benefits of becoming a murīd:

There are many benefits in becoming a murīd:

1. You may err in the different methods of reforming the heart. The shaykh shows the correct path in this regard.
2. In general the effects and benefits that you derive from a book or CD, DVD, Website etc. is never as great as that which you obtain from the guidance of a shaykh. You gain the barakah of the shaykh. Further, if the murīd displays any shortcoming in carrying out a good act or commits an evil act, he will be ashamed of this in front of the shaykh and this will be evident to both shaykh and murīd, whereas a book can never provide this kind of direct feedback.
3. You develop confidence and love for your shaykh. Based on this love and confidence, you are inclined to follow and emulate the ways of the shaykh.
4. The shaykh is often strict in giving his advice and may display anger. The murīd should not feel offended but endeavor to act upon his advice and understand the lesson being taught.

There are many other benefits which are acquired by those whom Allāh ﷻ has favored. These can only be known by acquiring and experiencing them.

Qualities of the Shaykh:

If a person wishes to become a murīd, he or she should first consider the following factors in the shaykh. If the latter does not possess these qualities, do not become their murīd, We have already discussed some of them, but it is important for the murīd to understand as much as possible in their search for someone whom, after all, they are entrusting with their life and soul.

1. The shaykh must know the important laws and regulations (*masa'al*) of the fiqh and should not be ignorant of the shari'ah.
2. He must not possess any quality that is contrary to the shari'ah. As such his beliefs (*aqā'id*) should be those of the People of the Sunnah and the broad community (*Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jam'āh*).

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

He should not possess any quality that is contrary to all the *masaʿil* and all those things connected to reformation of the heart held by those who follow the sunnah and are in agreement with the broadest section of the community (*jamʿah* or *ummah*)

3. He must not be carrying out this program of shaykh and murīd as a means of sustenance or gaining his livelihood.

4. Become the murīd of a person who is regarded as a pious person by the majority of good people.

5. Become the murīd of a person who is spoken highly of by those of knowledge and understanding (أولي الألباب/ʿulī-l-ʿabāb).

6. The program of instruction followed by the shaykh must be such that one develops a love and inclination for ʿIslām and the Prophet ﷺ. This can be gauged by looking at the condition of his murīdun. Even if fifty or sixty percent of his murīdun are good consider such a shaykh to be effective. Do not have doubts about him by looking at the condition of a few murīdun. You may have heard that the pious person has a lot of effect. This looking at the condition of his murīdun is a criteria whereby one can gauge the effect and power of a shaykh. Do not try to gauge the effect and power of a shaykh through other means, such as something occurring exactly as he mentioned it to you, someone getting cured by his mere touch, that a *taʿwīz* worked according to the reason for which he gave it to you or that if he fixes his gaze on a person he becomes completely entranced and at a loss or falls over at his least touch. Never be deluded by these effects and powers.

7. The shaykh must be such that he does not take into consideration the worldly status of his murīdun when giving them advice in the deen. That is, he does not favor his murīdun when it comes to reprimanding them in matters of the dīn. He stops them from useless and foolish things.

If you are a woman or under age and you have found such a shaykh, seek permission from your parents or from your husband (if you are married), and become a murīd of such a shaykh solely for the purpose of putting your deen in order.



## The Necessity for the Shaykh

If your parents or husband do not permit you to become a murīd, do not become one, as it is not *fard* to be a murīd. However, it is *fard* to tread the path of the dīn. You should therefore continue treading this path even if you are not a murīd of a shaykh.



### Rules connected to the shaykh and murīd

1. Be respectful to your shaykh. Remember the Name of Allāh ﷻ in exactly the way shown to you by your shaykh. Have the following belief with regard to your shaykh: “The spiritual benefits that *I* can gain from this shaykh cannot be gained from any other shaykh.”
2. If the heart of the murīd has not been reformed properly as yet and the shaykh passes away, he must become a murīd of another shaykh in whom the above-mentioned qualities are found.
3. When you come across any wazifah in any book or read about the saintly or aestic life of someone, do not act upon it on your own accord. Ask your shaykh about it first, If any good or evil thought enters your heart or you decide to do something, first consult your shaykh; this is the rule in general and particular.
4. If you are a women, do not remove your purdah or hijab in the presence of your shaykh. At the time of becoming a murīd, do not take his hand in yours. It is permissible to make the oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) by holding one end of a handkerchief or piece of cloth while he holds the other end or by putting your hands in a bowl of water with his without coming into contact with his hand.
5. If you mistakenly become a murīd of a person who acts contrary to the shari'ah, or if the shaykh was good in the beginning and later changed, then sever your contact with him and become a murīd of some other pious person. However, if your shaykh commits a minor sin which could be overlooked, then think to yourself that he is also human and that he is not an angel. He has made a mistake which could be forgiven by his making *tawbah*. Do not allow your conviction in him to dwindle over trivial matters. However, if the shaykh persists in such acts, sever your contact with him.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

6. It is wrong to believe that your shaykh has full knowledge of everything. This is a quality which belong to Allāh ﷻ alone.
7. Do not read books which have stories of people who act contrary to the shari'ah, Don't read books or see films that are contrary to the shari'ah.
8. Some people say that the path of the shari'ah is different from the path of the sufis. Such people are clearly astray and it is farḍ to consider them to be liars.
9. If the shaykh asks you to do anything that is contrary to the shari'ah it is not permissible to act upon it. Think that he is testing you. If he insists on you carrying it out, then sever your contact with him,
10. If, due to the barakah of taking the Name of Allāh ﷻ you experience a good state in your heart, you have a good dream or (upon waking up) hear a voice or see some light, then do not mention this to anyone other than your shaykh nor inform anyone of the *wazifahs* that you read or the *'ibadāt* that you make because by doing so this good fortune may slip away.
11. If your shaykh asks you to recite a particular *wazifah* or engage in a particular form of *dhikr* and after some time you still do not experience any delight in this not be disheartened, nor should you lose your confidence in your shaykh. Instead think to yourself that the greatest effect is that your heart is making an intention remembering Allah ﷻ and that you are being given the opportunity to do good. Never think that you should be blessed with the opportunity of pious persons appearing in your dreams, that you should begin to have knowledge of things that are still going to occur, that you should be able to cry profusely or that you should become so engrossed in your *'ibadāt* that you are unaware of other things. These things occur at times and at times they do not. If they do, express your gratitude to Allah ﷻ. If they do not occur, decrease after having occurred frequently, or cease to occur altogether, then do not be saddened. However, if, Allāh forbid, you display any shortcoming in following the shari'ah or commit any, then this is definitely something to be distressed about.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

You should immediately make an effort to put your condition in order, inform your shaykh about it and act upon his advice.

12. Do not be disrespectful of other shuyukh or other sūfī orders. Nor should you address the murīds of other shuyukh or other sūfī orders by telling them that your shaykh is greater than theirs or that your shaykh's order is greater or better than theirs. This is shayṭānic behavior and by engaging in such unnecessary and foolish conversations the heart begins to darken.

13. If your shaykh pays more attention to a fellow murīd, or if a fellow murīd gains more benefit from his wazifahs and dhikrs, do not be jealous of him. Instead strengthen your own intention (niyah) and strive harder.



General guidelines on how a murīd and, in reality, all Muslims should spend their nights and their days:

1. Acquire knowledge of the *dīn* according to your needs. You can acquire knowledge by asking the *ʿulama*, by reading scholarly books or listening to lectures.
2. Abstain from all sins and wrongful acts.
3. If you commit any sin, repent and make *tawba* immediately.
4. Do not hold back in fulfilling anyone's right. Do not cause anyone physical or verbal harm. Do not speak ill of anyone.
5. Do not have any love for wealth nor any desire for name and fame. Do not cloth yourself with extravagant food and clothing,
6. If someone rebukes you about a mistake or error you made do not try to justify your act. Admit your fault and repent.
7. Do not embark on a journey without any dire necessity. This is because many unconscious and unintended acts are committed while on journeys. Many good deeds are missed out, there is a shortcoming in the different forms of dhikr or acts of ʿibadah and you may not be able to accomplish your tasks on time.
8. Do not laugh or talk excessively. Take special precaution talking or joking with those who are not *muhrim* in an informal way.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

9. Do not go about repeating or mentioning an argument that may have taken place between two persons.
10. Always be mindful of the rules of the shari'ah in everything that you do
11. Do not display laziness in executing any act of 'ibadah.
12. Try to spend most of your time in seclusion and quiet.
13. If you have to meet and converse with others, meet them with humility and do not display your greatness.
14. Associate as little as possible with rulers, those who hold high positions or who are in government.
15. Stay very far from irreligious or worldly people.
16. Do not search for the faults of others. Do not have evil thoughts about anyone. Instead, look at your own faults and try to put them in order.
17. You should be very particular in offering your ṣalat in the proper manner, at the proper time and with great concentration.
18. Always occupy yourself in the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ either with your heart or tongue. Do not be neglectful in this regard at any time.
19. If you experience any satisfaction in taking the name of Allāh ﷻ and your heart feels happy over this, then express your gratitude to Allāh ﷻ
20. Speak in a nice, polite and humble way.
21. Set aside specific times for all your different tasks and abide strictly to these times. Always try to keep your appointments on and in time. Always try to be in time and on time.
22. Consider whatever regret, sorrow or loss you may experience to be from Allāh ﷻ. Do not be despondent. Instead, think that you will be rewarded for your sorrow or loss.
23. Do not think about worldly matters, calculations, profits and losses, etc. all the time. Instead, think about Allāh ﷻ.
24. As far as possible, try to help and benefit others in all things.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

25. Do not eat and drink too little to the extent that you become weak and fall ill. Nor should you eat and drink too much to the extent that you feel lazy in carrying out the different acts of ʿibadah.
26. Do not have any desire or greed for anything from anyone except Allāh ﷻ. Do not allow your mind to wander towards any place thinking that you will be able to gain certain benefit or profit from there.
27. Be restless in your quest for Allāh ﷻ.
28. Be grateful for the favors that are bestowed upon you irrespective of whether they are plenty or few, Do not be depressed with poverty and destitution.
29. Overlook the faults and mistakes of those who are under your control but do not condone them.
30. If you learn of the fault of someone, conceal it. However, if the person plans to cause harm to someone else and you learn of it, then warn the other person beforehand,
31. Always be in the service of guests, travelers, strangers, ʿulama, ʾawliya and the other pious servants of Allāh ﷻ
32. Choose the company of the pious.
33. Be conscious and have taqwa of Allāh ﷻ at all times.
34. Remember death frequently; understand you will not leave this world alive.
35. Set aside a certain time daily wherein you should think about all your actions for that day. When you remember any good action, express gratitude. When you remember any evil action, repent and make *tawbah*.
36. Don't lie.
37. Don't ever attend gatherings that are contrary to the shariʿah.
38. Live with bashfulness (*hushmah*), modesty and forbearance.
39. Do not be conceited by thinking, "I have such-and-such qualities in me."
40. Continue making duʿaa to Allāh ﷻ to keep you steadfast.



## The Relationship of the Shaykh and the Mūrīd

As mentioned earlier, this is a physician-patient relationship. The murīd tells/writes about his spiritual ailments seeking remedies. He has to be explicit and candid about his condition. Hiding vital information leads nowhere and eventually the murīd is the loser. The Shaykh reviews the condition of the murīd taking into account his or her spiritual ailments or deficiencies, physical and working requirements and environment. He then prescribes a treatment plan. There may be multiple components of this plan.

The murīd has to follow this plan unconditionally. If he or she faces difficulties in doing so he or she has to inform the shaykh. And then follow the next advice.

The doctor may be the best in the whole world. His diagnosis may be 100% accurate. The treatment prescribed and made available may be the finest. With all this in place, if the murīd decides not to use it or use it partially, (using his brains instead) how can a cure be imagined, much less achieved? The duty of the sincere murīd is to inform the shaykh of his present condition. That is, he reviews his daily activities, dealings and intentional thoughts. He analyzes them. He looks for any blameworthy traits that may be active in his intentions and actions or any praiseworthy states that are deficient. He describes the actual case scenarios and asks assistance from shaykh for diagnosis and treatment. He follows the recommendations of the shaykh and reports back. Adjustment may be made, treatment fine tuned and tailored accordingly. This process continues for a considerable period of time till a healthy spiritual state is reached, that is, achievement of a sustainable mutual relationship with Allāh ﷻ. As every patient's condition is different so is the treatment plan. It is this individual attention and instruction which gives *taṣawwuf* a unique effectiveness in bringing about a permanent, durable and wholesome change for a complete ʿIslamic life in its fullest sense.



## The Necessity for the Shaykh

A few words of advice for the shuyukh from their brother.

From one who is poor before his Lord,

A servant of orphans, widows, prisoners and the broken hearted..

Know that if you serve any of the murīdun, they will reject you in the end. Most of them will insult you and despise you. Some will patronize you and others will disregard you others will try to destroy you, relegate you to inconsequentiality and irrelevancy. This is the signature indication that Allāh ﷻ has accepted your services.

The true *khādim* (servant — and all of the true shuyukh are but servants) serves with the hope that one moment of his services might be glanced at by his Divine Beloved and there should be no other considerations. We are not concerned with rewards or recompense, but we *are* most concerned to BE SEEN by Allāh ﷻ.

Unfortunately we are all emotional creatures, and the rejection of the murīdun hits us all with sorrow and loss. However be assured you will most always be able to unearth, within those moments of sorrow and rejection, valuable nuggets of knowledge (*maʿrifah*):

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ  
وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

mā ʾaṣāba mim-muṣībatin illā bi-ʾidhni-llāh

wa maʿny-yuʾmim-bi-llāhi yahdi qalbih

wa-llāhu bi-kulli shayin ʿalīm

No affliction befalls anyone save by the Permission of Allāh.  
And whoever faithfully believes in Allāh, He guides his heart,  
and Allāh knows all things.

(Sūrah at-Taghābun 64:11)

We love those whom we serve, because Allāh ﷻ loves them and Allāh ﷻ induced their love within us, it is ok to be rejected here, this is how we are given knowledge for our own departure to and in and with and by and for Allāh ﷻ.

*wa-llāhu ʿalim*

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

I wrote this in Green Mountain, Virginia and gave this talk on Dhul Qa'idah 19<sup>th</sup>, 1430 which was November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the Islamic Study Center in Charlottesville as part of the Five Sundays program.

After the talk I was approached by one of those present who thanked me but said that whilst he found it very instructive it was a bit too formal and did I have anything personal to add.

Today is the 24<sup>th</sup> of July or the 14<sup>th</sup> of Shab'ān in 1431, and again I am on the Green Mountain and it is 94° and I am fasting as it is, after all, Sha'bān, and I thought I would add a few personal notes to honor the request of the one who asked.

I came to my first “Šūfī” teacher a very much broken-hearted seeker or even, you could say, a desperate seeker. I had met him before and listened to him and I was taken with him, the way he looked, the way he talked and his nobility, all of which led me to give him my bay'ah. He warned me at the time, saying, “If you knew what you were doing you might never do it.” I had no idea what that meant. I only knew I needed some help and needed it bad.

I stayed with him for a few weeks, during which time I learned the rudiments of dhikr and guided meditation. I was very surprised when he told me he was soon leaving to visit his father's tomb in India with his very young son and wife and would I like to come along to “help out” and also, since I was, even then, a writer and producer of books, help him organise a book he was trying to write.

I, of course, said “yes” immediately as leaving the country would solve a lot of the problems which had led me to have a broken heart and, besides, I had for many years wanted to visit India.

For anyone interested in knowing about this particular journey you can read about it in a paper I gave at the All Pakistan Mashāikh Conference honoring Ḥazrat Khwaja Nizāmuddīn 'Awliya ؒ in Lahore at Data Ganja Baksh in 2007/1428 titled, “*Some Reflections on the Beginnings of my Path to Allāh and by Allāh*”.

The long and short of it is that for first the first time I met Muslims who defined themselves as “Šūfī” in old Delhi at the maqām and dargah of Ḥazrat Khwaja Nizāmuddīn 'Awliya ؒ.



## The Necessity for the Shaykh

Later during the journey I met other Muslims who also defined themselves as “Şūfī” and I found out that my teacher, who defined himself as a “Şūfī”, didn’t define himself as a Muslim, which led to a form of cognitive dissonance on my part though not on his.

Three years later I asked him for permission to take his leave as I could no longer live with that uncomfortable feeling caused by holding contradictory ideas simultaneously, and I went to al-Quds in Occupied Palestine where after a short time I gave myself up and formally became a Muslim by giving my *shahadah* in the Şhārī‘ah College of the Ḥaram Şharīf at al-Aqṣa. Shortly later I found a *shaykh* in the small city of al-Kḥali, I also in Occupied Palestine who advised me to forget Şufism “for now” and first study ‘Islām.

This, in time, led me to go and live in Makkah where I studied Arabic Language for three years at the College of Şhārī‘ah until a friend advised me that I would do better studying in Cairo, where I met literally hundreds of *shuyūkh* and attended many circles of *dhikr* and *ḥadrah* on a regular basis and, more or less, lived in the *maqamāt* of *ahlu-l-bayt* ﷺ and the the ‘awliya karam ﷺ.

In al-Qahirah I met the man who was to be my *shaykh* for life, may Allāh have mercy on him as he is no longer alive. His name was *Shaykh* Dr. Ibrahīm Muḥammad al-Batawī ﷺ. He taught mainly foreign students for some twenty five years at al-Azhar ash-Şharīf from the ‘*Iḥya Ulūmu-d-Dīn* of the esteemed ‘Alim, *Shaykh* Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Gḥazālī (1058–1111) ﷺ.

When I first met him in the 1970’s I went for teaching and to attend *dhikr* and *ḥadrah* at his *zawiyyah* on al-Azhar Street on Thursday nights. Some years later in the mid-1980’s, when I was working in America on the Dar al-‘Islām project which I founded in 1400H., he came to visit, and during that visit I formally give him my *bay‘ah* and at the same time he made me his *Khalifah* and representative in the West, a post I continue to hold and try to fulfill, *bidḥni-llāh*.

In the intervening time I also gave *bay‘ah tabarakah* to a few other *Shuyukh* from whom I hoped to learn certain specific teachings which were not included or emphasised in his own teachings.

## The Necessity for the Shaykh

I gave bay<sup>°</sup>ah takbarkkah to Shaykh Dr. Seyed <sup>°</sup>Alī Ashraf ؒ of Dhaka, a Mujaddi Naqshbandi who taught in Jeddah, where I first met him, and later at Cambridge University in the UK. He taught me the fine points of the muraqabah and meditation in the realms of the world of the Creative Imagination of Shaykh al-<sup>°</sup>Akbar.

I also gave bay<sup>°</sup>ah tabarrakah to Shaykh <sup>°</sup>Umar Abdullāh ؒ of the Comoros Islands, a Ba <sup>°</sup>Alawi Shaykh who transmitted to me the principles of Islāmic Da<sup>°</sup>wah and Calling and gave me <sup>°</sup>ijaza and his <sup>°</sup>idhn to work in this field which has been of inestimable help.

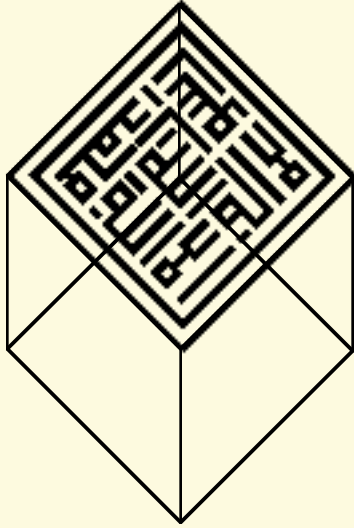
While living in Alexandria in Egypt for five years in the 90's I formally began teaching for the first time under the guidance of Shaykh Ibrahim and worked on the translation and transliteration of the *Book of Orisons* of Shaykh Abu-l Hasan ash-Shadhdhulī ؒ. I returned in 1995 to America for what I thought would be a brief visit. There I received a phone call from an old friend, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal of al-Quds, who told me he had a waking dream in which the Prophet ﷺ appeared to him and, among another things, told him to tell me to stay in America. I followed those instructions and made use of my time here to translate and transliterate the Qur<sup>°</sup>ān and continue the work of my Shaykh ؒ.

I was also fortunate in 2007/1428 to be invited to Pakistan by Shaykh Qutbu-d-Dīn Yar Farīdī to give some talks there. I found in him my original home and first beginnings in the Nizamiyyah-Chistiyyah, and he found in me something he was looking for as well in the teachings of Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan, and so we exchanged bay<sup>°</sup>ah and he confirmed khilafah on me in the line of Ḥazrat Khwaja Nizamuddīn <sup>°</sup>Awliya ؒ and Ghawth al-Aẓim ؒ, which has enabled me to greatly expand my work here in North America as I am able to actively work both in the realms of the Shadhdhuli and also in the realms of the Chistiyyah and Qadri turūq.

I hope these few words serve to fulfill the desire on the part of the person who asked for something personal in this essay/talk on the *Necessity of the Shaykh*. I assure the reader or listener that I consider my self to be nothing and aspire only to be the dust beneath the sandal of the Prophet ﷺ....wa-llāhu <sup>°</sup>alim



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